

# IDAHO COMPREHENSIVE STATE WATER PLAN

## Payette River Basin

Prepared by: Idaho Department of Water Resources  
Water Planning Bureau

Prepared for: Idaho Water Resource Board

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Adopted February 5, 1999

BEFORE THE WATER RESOURCE BOARD  
OF THE STATE OF IDAHO

IN THE MATTER OF THE PAYETTE )  
RIVER BASIN COMPONENT OF THE )  
COMPREHENSIVE STATE WATER PLAN )

A RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Board, pursuant to its planning authorities in 42-1734A and 42-1734B, Idaho Code, has developed a Comprehensive State Water Plan for the Payette River Basin; and

WHEREAS, the Board is directed to identify goals and objectives, as well as make recommendations for improving, developing or conserving the water resources of the planning basin; and

WHEREAS, the Board as part of its planning process is authorized to designate protected river reaches as "natural" or "recreational" and to prohibit certain activities within the stream bed; and

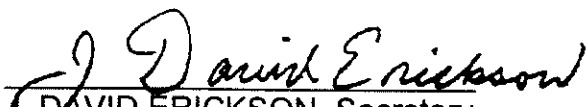
WHEREAS, the Board has sought and received substantial public participation throughout the planning process for the Payette River Basin component of the Comprehensive State Water Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, having considered the draft plan and the public comment received, the Board hereby adopts the attached Comprehensive State Water Plan – Payette River Basin.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 5th day of February, 1999.

  
CLARENCE PARR, Chairman

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In February 1991, the Idaho Water Resource Board adopted the *Comprehensive State Water Plan: Payette River Reaches* that was approved by the Idaho Legislature in April 1991. The Payette River Reaches Plan examined segments of the North Fork Payette River from Cabarton Bridge to Banks, the South Fork Payette River from the Sawtooth National Recreation Area boundary to Banks, and the main Payette River from Banks to Black Canyon Dam. The Board began a review of this plan in 1995, but decided to prepare a comprehensive state water plan for the entire Payette River Basin instead of updating the Payette River Reaches Plan. The Payette River Basin Comprehensive State Water Plan encompasses the North Fork Payette, South Fork Payette, Deadwood, Middle Fork Payette, and main Payette rivers, and all tributaries draining into these waterways.

The Payette River Basin Plan describes and evaluates water resources and related economic, cultural, and natural resources in the basin. The plan takes actions and recommends water policy and water resource management options to improve, develop, and conserve the water resources of the Payette River Basin. Goals, objectives, actions, and recommendations contained in the plan were developed with the help of a Payette River Citizens Group, comprised of individuals representing various water users in the basin.

River segments with outstanding fish and wildlife, recreational, scenic, or geologic values are identified and assessed for state protection in the plan. If the Board decides that the values of preserving the waterway in its existing state outweigh the values of continued development, it can, subject

to legislative approval, prohibit several activities from occurring within the stream channel to protect existing values and uses.

The Payette River is a major tributary to the Snake River, draining about 3,320 square miles in west-central Idaho. About 60 percent of the basin is public land. The estimated amount of water entering the basin each year as precipitation is about 5.3 million acre-feet. The amount leaving the basin as the annual flow volume of the Payette River at Payette is 2.2 million acre-feet. The remaining 3.1 million acre-feet are diverted or lost through evapotranspiration by native vegetation and crops, through evaporation from open water and bare ground, or ground water recharge. An unknown volume leaves the basin as groundwater discharge into the Snake River.

The Payette River Basin is rural with an estimated population of about 37,000 people in 1996. Major population centers include Payette, Emmett, Fruitland, McCall, New Plymouth, Cascade, Horseshoe Bend, Donnelly, and Crouch. Average annual population growth rates for the basin exceeded the state average for the period from 1970 to 1996.

Major industries are agriculture (farming and ranching), timber, and recreation. Irrigated agriculture mainly occurs in two areas of the basin: the lower Payette Valley below Emmett, and Long Valley between McCall and Cabarton. Smaller valleys have some irrigated agriculture as well. Approximately 33 percent of the basin is considered tentatively suitable for timber harvest. The basin is characterized by 60,000 surface acres of boatable

rivers, lakes, and reservoirs, comprising 9.1 percent of the state total. Five of the sixteen lakes in the state managed for a trophy or quality trout angling experience occur in the Payette River Basin. Winter sports are an important sector of the economy for upper basin communities.

## Summary of Public Comment Period on Draft Payette River Basin Plan

The Board circulated a Draft Payette River Basin Plan on November 9, 1998 for a sixty-day comment period. The majority of comments (72 percent) supported the actions and recommendations contained in the Draft Plan. Fourteen percent of the comments received did not support the Draft Plan. Most of these comments concerned three areas, including 1) designation of 193 miles of bull trout focal habitat as state recreational rivers; 2) a proposal to process a water right application for a minimum stream flow below Payette Lake; and 3) a request to amend the recreational designations on the South Fork and main Payette rivers to allow recreational dredge mining. The Board has made revisions to the Draft Plan in response to these comments which are

more specifically addressed in the *Actions and Recommendations* section of the final Payette River Basin Plan.

## Plan Actions

The Payette River Basin Plan retains the 87 miles of state recreational rivers designated in the 1991 Payette River Reaches Plan. Additionally, the Board has designated a 23.6 mile reach of the North Fork Payette River above Payette Lake as a state recreational river. The designations are summarized in the table that follows. Other Board actions include filing an application for a minimum stream flow on the North Fork Payette below Upper Payette Lake.

During the planning process, Gem Irrigation District asked the Board to amend the recreational designation for the North Fork Payette River below Smiths Ferry to allow construction of a hydropower project. The Board has rejected this request, and maintains the recreational designation with the prohibition of new hydropower projects. A number of recommendations addressing water allocation, water storage and delivery, municipal water supply, water quality, flood management, resource development, fisheries, agency planning and coordination, and recreation are included in the plan.

### Payette River Basin State Protected River Designations.

River Reach	Length	Outstanding Resource Values	Designation
<b><u>State Protected River Designations made in 1991</u></b>			
North Fork Payette River - Cabarton Bridge to Banks	28.0 miles	fish & wildlife, recreation, scenic	recreational
South Fork Payette River - Sawtooth National Recreation Area boundary to Banks	51.8 miles	fish & wildlife, recreation, scenic	recreational
Payette River - Banks to Beehive Bend	7.2 miles	fish & wildlife, recreation	recreational
<b><u>Additional Designation</u></b>			
North Fork Payette River - Headwaters to Payette Lake	<u>23.6 miles</u>	fish & wildlife, recreation, scenic	recreational
<b>Total Recreational River Miles:</b>	<b>110.6 miles</b>		

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Idaho Water Resource Board (Board) is a constitutional agency responsible for developing a plan for the State's water resources (Article XV, Section 7 of the Idaho Constitution). Legislation in 1988 provided for the development of a "comprehensive state water plan" based upon "waterways, river basins, drainage areas, river reaches, groundwater aquifers, or other geographic considerations" [Idaho Code 42-1734A]. Each basin or waterway plan becomes a component of the Comprehensive State Water Plan - Part B. The Board is to prepare a comprehensive state water plan for the conservation, development, management and optimum use of all unappropriated water resources and waterways in the public interest.

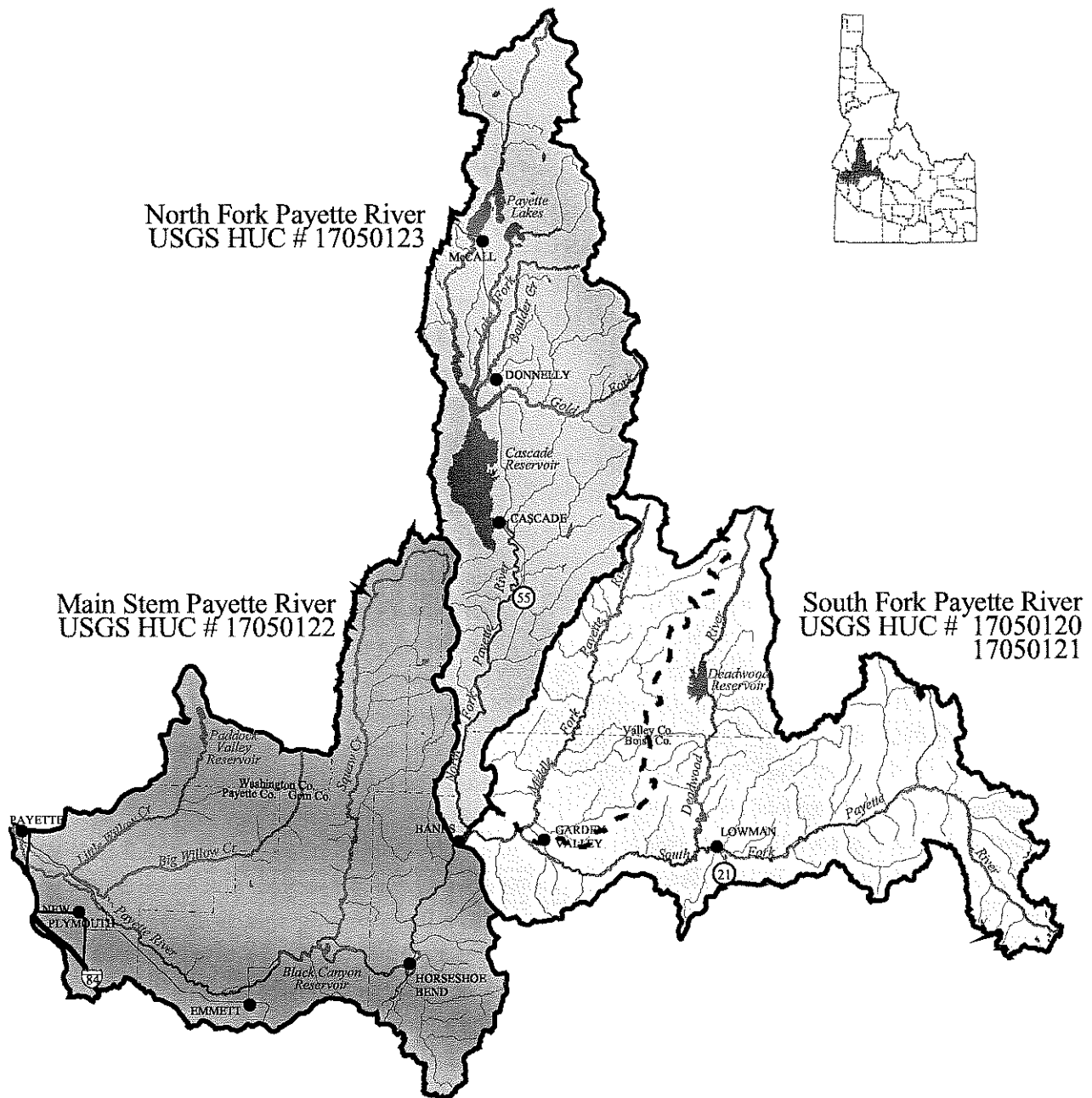
The Board is also authorized to preserve highly-valued waterways as state protected rivers. If the Board decides that the values of preserving a waterway in its existing condition outweigh the values of future development, it can, subject to legislative approval, designate that waterway either a "natural" or a "recreational" river. The 1988 legislation specifically recognized reaches of the North Fork Payette (Cabarton Bridge to Banks), South Fork Payette (Sawtooth Wilderness Boundary to Banks), and main Payette (Banks to Black Canyon Dam) rivers for possible designation. On July 1, 1988, these reaches were given state interim protection with a two-year deadline to complete a comprehensive state water plan to determine if designation was warranted. In February 1991, the Board adopted the *Comprehensive State Water Plan for the Payette River Reaches*. Board actions included designating reaches of the North Fork Payette, South Fork Payette, and main Payette rivers

as recreational rivers. The Idaho Legislature approved the plan in April 1991.

Because public concerns, values, and demands change over time, the Comprehensive State Water Plan must be reevaluated and may be amended. The Board will review and reevaluate the Comprehensive State Water Plan upon a request from the Idaho Legislature through a concurrent resolution, a petition from a state agency or individual to amend the plan, or if the Board determines it is necessary [Idaho Code 42-1734B(7)]. Private parties and public agencies may propose plan amendments. The Board will decide whether to amend the plan based on an evaluation of the impact of such change on the protection and preservation of the State's waterways, its economic impact on the state as a whole, its affects on existing water rights, and whether it is necessary to provide adequate and safe water for human consumption or to protect life. All amendments to the Comprehensive State Water Plan are submitted for review to the Idaho Legislature as required by law.

In 1995 the Board decided to prepare a comprehensive state water plan for the entire Payette River Basin in lieu of updating the Payette River Reaches Plan. The Payette River Basin Plan provides a general assessment of water supply, use, and management, encompassing the watershed area draining into the North Fork, South Fork, and main Payette rivers (See Map 1). The plan examines existing and planned resource uses in the basin, and discusses the Board's goals, objectives, recommendations, and actions for improving, developing, and conserving water resources in the public interest.

# Map 1. Subbasins and U.S. Geological Survey Level 4 Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) Boundaries



One inch equals approximately 15 miles

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## Planning Approach

The planning process encompassed six steps which are described below. Not all steps occurred in the order presented. Some occurred throughout the planning process and/or simultaneously with others.

1) ***Inventory resource attributes*** - The resource attribute inventory is summarized in the *Basin Overview*, *Water Resources* and *Other Resources* sections of the Payette River Basin Plan. Resource information, figures, and statistics for this plan were obtained through in-house analysis, literature review, field reconnaissance, contact with state and federal agency personnel, and citizen input. Maps of resource data were prepared at a scale of 1:24,000 using a geographic information system (GIS). Resource data were reviewed for accuracy by government agencies, a local citizens group, and interested public.

2) ***Identify local issues, concerns, and goals*** - Issues, concerns, and goals related to water use and management help frame the scope of the Payette River Basin Plan. These were identified through meetings with the public, management agencies and local officials, and a local citizens group. Issues, concerns, and goals for the Payette River Basin Plan are described in the *Issues, Considerations and Plan Objectives* portion of the plan, and are summarized in Appendix A.

3) ***Assess current and potential water uses and constraints*** - An assessment of current and potential water uses and constraints is contained in the *Water Resources* and *Institutional Constraints and Opportunities* sections of the Payette River Basin Plan. This information was obtained by review of water right files, pertinent literature, regulations and law, and discussion with agency personnel.

4) ***Assess and identify river segments with outstanding resource values*** - Waterways possessing outstanding fish and wildlife, recreation, scenic, or geologic values are eligible for state designation as natural or recreational waterways [Idaho Code, Sec. 42-1731]. Outstanding resources are indicated by unique or rare features regionally or nationally, and/or legal protection or special agency management designation to protect important resource values. Specific criteria for defining outstanding fish and wildlife, recreation and scenic resources are described in the *Resource Evaluation* section of the Payette River Basin Plan.

5) ***Develop alternatives or strategies*** - Strategies may be actions, recommendations or policies that respond to the issues and concerns identified, and intended to achieve the selected goals. They represent alternatives proposed by the public and agencies, and considered by the Board. The strategies considered for the Payette River Basin are listed in Appendix B.

6) ***Determine actions and recommendations*** - After considering alternatives and the public interest, actions and recommendations relative to improving, developing, and conserving water resources are proposed by the Board. Many actions and recommendations were the result of consensus achieved at Payette River Citizens Group workshops, and are described in the *Actions and Recommendations* section of the Payette River Basin Plan.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement is an important part of the planning process. Input from local citizens is necessary in assessing viewpoints and conditions in the basin. Information meetings, agency consultation, and citizens group workshops provided opportunity for public critique and suggestions for



the Payette River Basin Plan. Public information meetings were conducted April through May 1997 in McCall, Donnelly, Cascade, Lowman, Crouch, Horseshoe Bend, Sweet, Ola, Emmett, New Plymouth, Payette, and Boise to inform the public about preparation of a Payette River Basin Plan, and to ask the public to identify issues and concerns. In 1998 another public information meeting was held in Horseshoe Bend, announcing the formation of a citizens group and summarizing the issues identified at the Spring 1997 meetings.

The Payette River Citizens Group was formed in March 1998 to inform the Board and its staff about local concerns, review information used in the development of the plan, and provide feedback and suggestions for the Board's consideration. The group consisted of individuals representing various water users in the basin, including, but not limited to, irrigators, local government, property owners, fishermen, boaters, other recreationists, ranchers, timber industry, and hydropower. People representing these users were invited to participate to ensure all interests were represented and heard. However, membership and participation on the Citizens Group was open; any interested individual could be a member by attending the workshops.

The Board held a series of five Payette River Citizens Group workshops in April through June 1998. During these workshops, the Citizens Group ranked issues, developed goals, and identified actions and recommendations to submit to the Board. A list of Payette River Citizens Group members and a summary of Citizens Group workshops are furnished in Appendix C. About eighty individuals attended one or more of these workshops. Newsletters were circulated through the U. S. Postal Service or electronic mail to an additional 312 individuals that summarized the development of the Payette River Basin Plan, announced Citizens Group workshops, and requested comment on key pieces of information.

### ***Summary of Public Comment on Draft Payette River Basin Plan***

The Board circulated a Draft Comprehensive State Water Plan for the Payette River Basin on November 9, 1998 for a sixty-day comment period. Information meetings and hearings occurred in Cascade, Horseshoe Bend, and Boise in November and December 1998 to discuss and receive comment on the draft plan. Thirty-four people testified at the public hearings and sixty-eight written comments were received prior to the close of the comment period on January 9, 1999.

The majority (72 percent) of comments supported the actions and recommendations contained in the Draft Payette River Basin Plan. Fourteen percent of the comments received did not support the Draft Plan. Most of these comments concerned three main areas, including 1) designation of about 193 miles of bull trout focal habitat as state recreational rivers; 2) a proposal to process a water right application for a minimum stream flow below Payette Lake; and 3) a request to amend recreational river designations on the South Fork and main Payette rivers to allow recreational mining. The Board reexamined these actions and reviewed some additional information.

Actions and recommendations contained in the Draft Payette River Basin Plan were revised or expanded in response to these concerns. The Board adopted a *Final Comprehensive State Water Plan for the Payette River Basin* on February 5, 1999. The Final Plan was then presented to the Legislature for its consideration as required by Section 42-1734B of the Idaho Code. A summary of the public review schedule follows.

- Public Comment Period - November 9, 1998 to January 8, 1999
- Public Information Meetings in Cascade, Horseshoe Bend, and Boise - November 1998

- Public Hearings in Horseshoe Bend and Boise - *December 1998*

- Board Adoption of a Final Plan - *February 5, 1999*

- Submit to Legislature for Approval - *February 8, 1999*

- Signed by Governor - March 26, 1999